

The THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN

The Thoreau Society, Inc. in an informal gathering of students and followers of Henry David Thoreau. John McAleer, Lexington, Mass., president; Mrs. Russell Wheeler, Concord, Mass., vice-president; and Walter Harding, State University, Geneseo, N. Y. 14454, secretary-treasurer. Annual membership \$3.00; life membership, \$100.00. Address communications to the secretary.

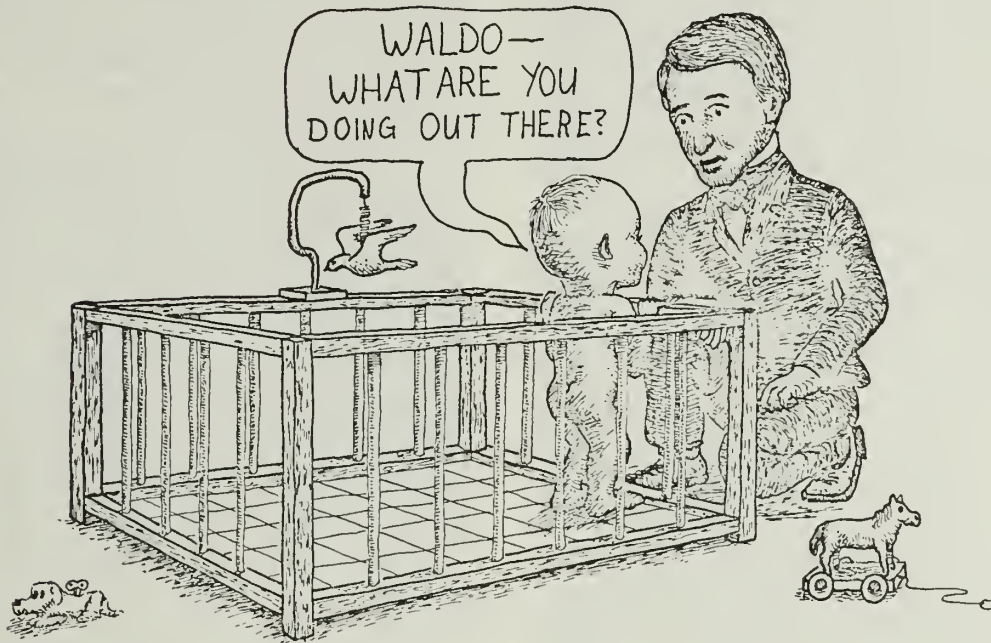
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BULLETIN ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SIX

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SUMMER 1981



YOUNG EMERSON MEETS BABY HENRY THOREAU, 1818

by Larry Matheson

Thoreau and James Freeman Clarke on "Doing Good"
by Martin Doudna

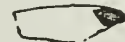
Thoreau did not normally have much use for preachers, especially if they were sanctimonious do-gooders like the three "ultra-reformers" who visited him in June 1853 (*Journal*, V, 263-65). But in James Freeman Clarke, the influential Unitarian minister who had edited *The Western Messenger* in Cincinnati and Louisville before returning to Boston in 1841, he seems to have found, at least on one occasion, a congenial mind whose views coincided with his own.

The occasion was one of Bronson Alcott's Boston Conversations in 1848 in which both Thoreau and Clarke took part. Clarke spoke of having read Silvio Pellico's *My Prisons*, the book to which Thoreau was to refer in "Civil Disobedience," and then commented: "Much is implied in the phrase 'going about doing good'; and still more when it reads 'going about being good.'"¹

Thoreau's comments, if any, on Clarke's statement are not recorded, but he may well have recalled it when making a similar, if considerably sharper and more extended, distinction toward the end of the first chapter of *Walden*: "Men say, practically . . . go about doing good. If I were to preach at

all in this train, I should say rather, go about being good." Whether Thoreau's perception of this distinction was derived from Clarke's comment or merely was corroborated by it hardly matters, for his elaboration of it in the succeeding paragraphs shows that he had clearly made it his own. The important question for Thoreau, as for any good writer, is not where he got his ideas, but what he did with them afterwards.

¹F. B. Sanborn and William T. Harris, *A. Bronson Alcott: His Life and Philosophy* (1893; rpt. New York, 1965), II, 413. Emphasis in the original.
University of Hawaii at Hilo



Mar. 2, 1855

WALDEN REVISITED by Douglas Jeffrey

My thoughts have been stirred by Mr. Gozzi's remarks in Bulletin 150. I have not had the opportunity to read his full-length study, but some of the anomalies he mentions in relation to Thoreau are ones that have occurred to me also over the years. I do not propose to reply to Mr. Gozzi on a point for point basis, but wish to address myself

in more general terms to the topic that he suggests.

I too came to Thoreau in graduate school, which also for me was a transitional period of great uncertainty, to say the least. I was profoundly influenced by Thoreau and his writings, and by Walden in particular. While still in school, and during the next few years, I read Thoreau extensively, and (I like to think) read him with a fair amount of perception.

Now, more than ten years later, Thoreau still occupies a central position in my intellectual firmament, but no longer is he the single, solitary star. My horizons have broadened to include other figures as well. But such was the spell that Walden cast over me, that for a period of several years Thoreau was practically an exclusive influence on my thinking. And I accepted as an article of faith that Thoreau and the persona of Walden were one and the same person, down to the last detail. After all, had not Thoreau lived in a cabin of his own making by the shore of Walden Pond? And was not Thoreau a truthful man?

Over the years I have reflected on Walden and dipped into its pages from time to time whenever I have felt the need of freshening my memory with its wisdom. At the same time, I have also reflected on the nature of Thoreau's life, which, thanks to the cumulative endeavors of several generations of scholars, has become familiar enough for us to evaluate with a fair degree of accuracy.

As I compared the two Thoreaus, I began to notice some incongruities between the image he presents in Walden and the picture of his actual life as we know it from his biographers. I know now that I am not the first to remark such discrepancies as there are, but in my own defense I'll wager that I will not be the last to so confuse the two identities that seem to be so close together and are yet so far apart with respect to some very fundamental issues. For example, was the real-life Thoreau really the independent figure that we might imagine from a reading of Walden? We know that his cabin was only a mile from the village that he visited rather frequently, and we also know that he was in the habit of entertaining an occasional visitor during his sojourn at the pond. More importantly, we know that for all practical purposes he remained a part of his family household for his entire adult life.

Was Thoreau really the leisurely, laid-back personality of Walden? We know that he worked at becoming a man of letters from his early twenties, and during the course of a relatively brief life, he wrote and published enough to fill something like ten volumes, and his private correspondence and journals have easily doubled or tripled the number of volumes in his oeuvre.

Was Thoreau really the unambitious character that inhabits the pages of Walden, indifferent to social opinion? If so, why bother to write the book at all, and why the impassioned defense of John Brown, and the night in jail, and the essay that followed?

Such was the nature of the questions that occupied me from time to time, and led me to a reconsideration of the man and his book. Had Thoreau lied to me, or had I simply misread him? Had he made a deliberate attempt to deceive me, or had I taken him too literally? After all, he was a poet, and as such had license to dramatize himself in any manner he saw fit.

More importantly, I began to feel that Walden itself contained an important clue that could lead toward a resolution of the anomaly. Given time enough and perception, any reader could arrive at a

true reading, quite independently of knowing anything at all about Thoreau's life. I am speaking of the tone that first appears in the epigraph on the title page, and is then sustained throughout the book, varied and modulated, to the end of the final sentence.

The quality that I am speaking of is of course humor, which of all literary genres is one of the most difficult to define, and Thoreau had a very subtle sense of humor. As my sensibilities refined themselves over the years, I began to appreciate his sense of humor more and more, and to see just how pervasive it was. As a result, I began to feel that he had meant what he said only half seriously, and had never intended his pronouncements to be taken as gospel truth or the final word. Thus I am relieved to report that Thoreau has not deceived us. We have only ourselves to blame, who have been so slow to understand him.

If, however, he's being only half-serious, then it must be also equally true that he's only half-joking. For despite its comic aspects, Walden impresses us as a serious work of art, which deals with the serious problems of life in a serious way. I would suggest that Thoreau was a man who was subject to the same desires, fears, and uncertainties that all of us are, and that the making of Walden was a literary labor of the highest order, that resolved the tensions and doubts in his own life, and possibly may in ours.

Far from being an amateur essayist who happened to publish a book or two, Thoreau was a conscientious literary artist who worked at making a name for himself from an early age. I would submit that the publication of The Week in 1849 was his long-awaited bid for the recognition that would permit him to move as a peer in the intellectual community to which he felt he belonged.

When the book failed, as perhaps Thoreau himself have been among the first to realize, we can only speculate on the nature of the thoughts and emotions that may have besieged him. Economical creature that he was, his first concern may perhaps have been for the money he was going to need to pay for the printing of it. Whatever, we know that his sense of humor eventually allowed him to treat the matter philosophically.

I would suggest that as a professional man of letters, Thoreau had several options available to him following the "publication" of The Week. He could have admitted defeat, and retreated into silence, but given his tenacity and desire to express himself, I doubt that he ever seriously considered such a course.

He could have withdrawn even further into himself, and become even more critical and contemptuous of the world that had failed to appreciate him. Given his uncompromising personality, I think that such a course may well have been one that he might have followed, had he been a lesser man.

But fortunately for himself (and for us), he had a reserve of spirit, or deep sense of well-being, that allowed him to deepen and expand, to open up, to mellow, to mature--call it whatever you like. But the end result of those years of ripening was something well worth waiting for--and that was Walden.

The heart of the book is not the years Thoreau spent at the pond, but the years following. The pond served as the basic metaphor that he used to express an inner emotional state. Significantly, we know that he added the latter and more philosophic chapters, dealing with the pond in winter, at a time

in his life when he also must have been weathering a personal crisis of great severity.

It's taken me a long time, standing on the shoulders of many tall people, to appreciate in full the magnitude of Thoreau's achievement, and I wonder if even the most perceptive of his contemporaries were aware of the actual stature of Walden. Perhaps they were literally too close to it to see just how great it really was and is.

I think however that Thoreau himself may well have had a good idea of the ultimate worth of his book. In the chapter titled "Reading," Thoreau gives us his characterization of a classic book, and I have sometimes wondered if he did not intend some parts of that description to apply to the book of his own. For instance, "...works as refined, as solidly done and beautiful almost as the morning itself; for later writers, say what we will of their genius, have rarely, if ever, equalled the elaborate beauty and finish and the lifelong and heroic literary labors of the ancients."

I would submit that Thoreau is one such writer, and that he knew it. His book to be sure is an illusion, but that's something he would have known too, better by far than any of his readers.

Though the book may be based on his life, the life cannot limit the book, because an accomplished piece of work (such as Walden) transfigures and transforms the mundane existence of the person who created it. If Thoreau did more with less than most of us can imagine possible, that in no way detracts from the value of his work. In fact, it makes Walden just that much more remarkable.

As for progeny, if we were to count among his children the members of the Thoreau Society alone, then surely Thoreau qualifies many times over as a great-grandfather (literally speaking).

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Feb. 14, 1855

THE 1981 ANNUAL MEETING . . .

The 1981 annual meeting of the Thoreau Society was called to order at 10 a.m., Saturday July 11, 1981, in the First Parish Church in Concord, by the president, Anne Root McGrath. The minutes of the 1980 meeting were accepted as printed in the Summer 1980 bulletin plus the correction in the Fall 1980 bulletin. The following report of the treasurer was read and accepted:

On hand, May 27, 1980. \$551.22

Receipts

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Dues | 2207.00 |
| Life memberships | 300.00 |
| Royalties | 114.61 |
| Interest | 396.10 |
| Luncheon tickets | 584.85 |
| Gifts | 763.37 |
| Misc. | 123.00 |
| | <u>4488.93</u> |

Expenses

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Postage | 1783.99 |
| Printing | 1144.73 |
| Annual meeting | 1520.80 |
| Travel | 524.00 |
| Legal expenses | 1008.60 |
| Telephone | 94.77 |
| Misc. | <u>106.34</u> |

On hand, May 18, 1981 \$3856.92

It was moved and voted that the president of the society be empowered to appoint a financial assistant to the secretary-treasurer who shall hold office at the pleasure of the president and under the direction of the secretary-treasurer, and

whose duties shall be such as may be delegated to him or her by the secretary-treasurer, such duties to include, but not to be limited to, signing checks in the absence of the secretary-treasurer and assisting the secretary-treasurer in the management of the society's endowment funds. The president then appointed John H. Clymer of Concord, Mass. to this position of financial assistant.

The nominating committee (J. Parker Huber, Edmund Schofield, and Linda Henning, chairman) presented the following slate of officers: John McAleer, Lexington, Mass., president; Anne Zwinger, Colorado Springs Col., president-elect; Marion Wheeler, Concord, Mass., vice-president; and Walter Harding, Geneseo, N.Y., secretary-treasurer; all for terms of one year; and Michael Meyer, Storrs, Conn., and Frederick Wagner, Clinton, N.Y., members of the executive committee for three years. The slate was accepted and the officers duly elected.

The following two motions were presented: (#1) To amend the articles of organization by adding the following paragraphs thereto: Notwithstanding any other provision of these Articles, the corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, literary, and educational purposes, as specified in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, and the corporation shall not carry on any activities which are not permitted to be

carried on by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under said Section.

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall consist of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation (except to the extent permitted under Section 501(h) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954) or participating in, or intervening in, including the publication or distribution of statements, any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

In the event of dissolution, all the remaining assets and property of the corporation remaining after payment of its outstanding obligations and any expenses attendant to such dissolution shall be distributed to the Concord Free Public Library, Concord, Massachusetts, so long as such organization shall then qualify under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or, if such organization shall not then be in existence or shall not qualify under said Section, to such other organization, to be used in such manner, as shall then qualify under such Section and as shall, in the judgment of the Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, best accomplish the general charitable purposes for which this corporation was formed.

All references in these Articles to Sections of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 shall include corresponding provisions of future Internal Revenue laws and applicable regulations and rulings thereunder, as any of the same may from time to time be amended.

(#2): To amend the by-laws of the corporation by striking Articles II and VIII and by substituting therefor the following new articles:

II. The purpose of this society shall be as set forth in its Articles of Organization.

VIII. In the event of the dissolution of the society, its assets shall be distributed as provided in its Articles of Organization.

Since it was found that there were not sufficient votes and proxy votes to attain a two-thirds vote of the membership, it was moved (at the end of the business session) that this meeting be adjourned to August 19, 1981 at 8:00 p.m. at the Thoreau Lyceum, 156 Belknap Street, Concord, Massachusetts, for the sole purpose of receiving additional votes which may be cast upon the motion above presented by Mr. Clymer to amend the articles of organization and by-laws of the society to conform to the requirements of the Internal Revenue Service. And the secretary was instructed to request proxy votes from all those members of the society who have not

as yet sent them in.

It was moved by Dana Greeley and voted that whereas the Thoreau Society and the Thoreau Lyceum have such extensive common interests; and whereas there is already such overlapping or interlocking of officers and members of the two organizations; and whereas the responsibility for doing justice to Thoreau's name and life is not diminishing but increasing; Therefore, be it resolved that the next President and the Secretary of this Thoreau Society,

or the Executive Committee, appoint a committee of three and invite the Thoreau Lyceum to appoint a similar committee, if it so chooses, to consider ways in which the two organizations could work more closely together, or even ultimately in unison with one another, for the strengthening of their joint purposes. And be it resolved that the said committees, if appointed, working together shall report back to our Executive Committee and to the Annual Meeting of this society at an early date, or its convenience, in the future.

Elizabeth Witherell, editor-in-chief of the Princeton University Press Thoreau Edition, reported that JOURNAL 1 (1837-1844) of the new edition will appear in September, 1981; JOURNAL 2 (1842-1848), in Spring, 1983; and TRANSLATIONS, in Fall, 1983.

Anne McGrath reported briefly on the saving of Adams' Woods; and Eugene Walker, on current conditions at Walden Pond. It was announced that the bath houses at the pond will soon be demolished and replaced away from the pond's edge.

A resolution was adopted commending and thanking Patience Hosmer MacPherson for her many years of service as vice-president of the society.

Walter Harding read the following memorial tribute to Edwin Way Teale:

EDWIN WAY TEALE (1899-1980)

We cannot let this meeting pass without a word for our old friend and fellow Thoreauvian Edwin Way Teale, who passed away last fall at the age of eighty-one. I am not going to rehearse the names of his many books or the many honors he so deservedly won. I am not even going to tell of his many years of service to this society as executive committee member and president. Those are facts that are familiar to all of you. Instead I want to speak of Edwin as a personal friend.

I had the good fortune of knowing him as a friend for nearly forty years. As many of you know, for nearly twenty-five years the two of us always went canoeing together on the Concord rivers early on the morning of the annual meeting. I can still see him now in my mind's eye sitting in the stern of the canoe, paddle in hand--since he outweighed me considerably (in more ways than one, I would like to add) he always sat in the back and boasted he was ballast as well as part-propellant.

Edwin had what Thoreau called the "observant eye." Nothing escaped his sharp glance. I recall once picking him up in Rochester and driving him out to our home in Geneseo. He was immediately noting and commenting on aspects of the landscape and of the architecture of the region that I who had lived there for years had never noticed.

Edwin was always filled with curiosity. I never was with him but that within five minutes he would pull out that little notebook he always carried in his shirt pocket and from it ply me with questions that had come to his mind in reading Thoreau. "Say, Walt, what bird was Henry talking about when he spoke of the 'red election bird'?" "Say, Walt, what was the tumbleweed Thoreau spoke of?" If I were lucky enough to know the answer, down it would go into his notebook, often to turn up later in one of his books. It was that eye for detail that made his books so delightful.

But what I remember most about Edwin was his sense of humor. He always had a tale to tell and

most often the joke of it was on himself. He laughed about filling in at the last moment when the scheduled speaker at a meeting in Baltimore backed out, and being introduced by the chairman of the meeting with, "We were going to hear Mr. So-and-so give a very interesting lecture on such-and-such, but he couldn't make it here so instead we are going to hear Mr. Teale speak on bugs"--spitting out the last word as distastefully as he could.

When Edwin lived in Baldwin, Long Island, he was one of the last to give up a coal-burning furnace. Whenever he visited New England, he would always bring back some of his favorite old-fashioned Moxie. He was amused then one morning as he sat in his study to hear the local trash collector saying to his new apprentice, "This is a queer duck who lives here--he not only burns coal, but he drinks Moxie!"

As much as people enjoyed hearing Edwin speak in public, he never relished doing it and told me often that he was never scheduled to give a lecture but that he began having a recurring nightmare that the moment he was introduced he would look down and notice his shoestring was untied. He would stoop down to tie it and would have so much shoestring left that he would have to tie a second knot and a third and a fourth till the knots reached his knees and he would never get around to giving his speech.

Edwin was forever receiving queries from his enthusiastic readers--queries he always endeavored to answer. His favorite was from a lady who wrote asking him to help her identify two species of birds she kept seeing in her yard. Her only description was, "One kind goes, 'Cheep, cheep,' and the other kind goes, 'Tweet, tweet.'" Now what kinds of birds are they, Mr. Teale?

Edwin was a most thoughtful person. Francis H. Allen, the first editor of Thoreau's journal, was in his nineties in the early days of the Thoreau Society and living alone in West Roxbury. Every year, as long as Mr. Allen was able, Edwin always drove over to West Roxbury and brought Mr. Allen back for the meeting. When Henry Bugbee Kane, the illustrator of many of Thoreau's writings, was suffering his final illness, Edwin never came to Concord without taking time out to go over to Lincoln to see him. When one of Edwin's admirers offered him an all-expense paid trip to the Caribbean, Edwin turned it down but suggested successfully that the donor instead send a man from Michigan who had made a life study of the rare Kirtland warbler and had always wanted to see its winter residence in the Caribbean but could never afford the trip.

Edwin made a little game of always autographing his books differently for me. He was autographing one one morning after our annual canoe trip, scratched his head a few minutes, and then crawled back into the canoe, wrote in the book, and then handed it to me, saying, "Here's something different." When I opened it, it read, "For Walt. Autographed in a canoe on Concord River. Ed Teale."

When I wrote The Days of Henry Thoreau, I dedicated it jointly to Martin Luther King and Edwin. Sterling North, in a review in the Saturday Review of Literature, chastized me for not putting Edwin's name first. Actually I had purposely put them in alphabetical order to show my equal admiration. Edwin, typically modestly, wrote me after he read North's comment, "I don't know anyone I would rather be second to than Martin Luther King."

The last time I saw Edwin was in the late summer of 1979. He was working on his proposed book on the rivers of Concord that his collaborator Anne Zwinger is now going to complete for him. I was here in Concord and he called from Trail Wood to say he wanted to come up and check some more facts before he put them into his book--a very typically Teale trait. We met at Howard Johnson's for breakfast, drove out to Fairhaven Bay, unloaded his canoe from the top of his car--and at eighty he still swung that canoe down easily from the car roof with what he called his special Teale canoe

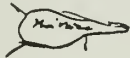
unloading gadget, an invention of his own. We paddled out to the island and explored it from end to end, he taking pages and pages of notes. Then he wanted to explore the Adams' Woods further and we spent three or four hours visiting each of the Andromeda Ponds, Well Meadow, Spanish Brook, and Baker Farm as well. It was a sizzling hot day, the hottest of the summer. Sweat poured off his brow, but he was undaunted. He had facts to find out and miles of hiking in a ninety degree temperature was not going to stop him even at the age of eighty. In fact, he was in his finest form and regaled me with tales all day long. I feel blessed in having been able to spend that last day with him. It is among my choicest memories.

Edwin used often to comment that the Thoreau Society meetings were the only ones that he happily attended year after year. I don't believe he missed more than two or three in the nearly forty years he belonged to the society, and then only when a previous unrevokable engagement forced him to be in some other part of the world. He said he attended them so faithfully because "they were the only ones where each meeting was better than the one before. They never failed expectations." And I like to think that of Edwin too. Each time I met him, he seemed more wonderful than the time before. He never failed expectations.

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William Condry spoke on "Thoreau's Influence in Britain" and Anne Root McGrath gave the presidential address on "Growing Up in Thoreau's Concord." We plan to print their talks in a forthcoming bulletin. After the luncheon and the annual Thoreau quiz conducted by Roland Robbins, Mary Fenn conducted a walk to the Estabrook Woods; Marion Wheeler led a tour of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery; Billy Anderson gave a showing of some of his grandmother Esther Anderson's slides of the Thoreau Country; and Marcia Moss showed the Thoreau treasures in the Concord Free Public Library. A sherry party and box supper were served at the Thoreau Lyceum. The evening program featured a showing of Albert Bussewitz's slides "Through the Seasons with Thoreau." And the program came to a close with Anne McGrath presenting the president's gavel to the incoming president John McAleer.

A newspaper account and pictures of the meeting may be found in the Concord Journal for July 16, 1981.



Apr. 7, 1855

ADDITIONS TO THE THOREAU BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . WH
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- "Life without Principle." Trans. into Polish by Halina Cieplinska-Bitner. TWORCZOSC, August, 1973.
- WALDEN. Edited with notes in Japanese by Takeo Akiyama. Tokyo: Taiyosha, 1981. 73pp. An abridged edition.
- WALDEN. Trans. into Japanese by Yoshihiro Masaki. Tokyo: JICC Press, 1981. 264pp. A new translation by a cultural anthropologist which originally appeared serially in the magazine TAKARAJIMA. It is considered a more readable translation, particularly for young people, than earlier Japanese translations. It is illustrated with many, many drawings of birds and animals and several paintings in full color. It was published in February, and by April had gone into a second printing.
- WALDEN EIN LEBEN IN DEN WALDERN. Trans. into Roumanian by Franz Meyer. Bukarest: Kriterion, 1976. 424pp.
- WIDERSTAND GEGEN DIE REGIERUNG. [Civil Disobedience]. Hamburg: Atkionskreis f. Gewaltlosigkeit. 1959.
- Wagenknecht, Edward. HENRY DAVID THOREAU: WHAT MANNER OF MAN? Review. CS, Fall, 1980.
- Williams, Paul. THE ENDS OF THE CIRCL. New York: Ballentine Books, 1981. 203pp. A science-fiction novel by our society's former president, quoting Thoreau.

We are indebted to the following for information sent in for this bulletin: W.Bly, A.Black, J.Butkis, A.Butler, H.Cahoon, H.Durre, J.Eggert, R.Epler, F.Fenn, V.Halbert, W.Howarth, G.Hasenauer, D.Hannan, R.Haynes, C.Hoagland, B.Haynes, E.Johnson, G.Kerfoot, D.Kamen-Kaye, K.Kasegawa, M.Manning, D.McWilliams, A.McGrath, W.McInnes, T.Marshall, R.Needham, R.Parris, G.Runyan, G.Ryan, A.Seaburg, E.Schofield, R.Thompson, J.Teresko, W.Teller, J.Vickers, P.Walker, and E.Witherell. Please keep the secretary informed of items he has missed and new items as they appear.



May 7, 1855

REPORT OF THE WALKING SOCIETY - HILLSIDE by Mary Fenn

Mary Russell came from Plymouth to teach school in Concord, and being a very attractive young lady soon became part of the young set in the village. In fact John S. Keyes had a crush on her, even calling her (in his diary at least) Sanctissima. Nor did she

escape the eye of Henry Thoreau. At a party Henry was planning to take Mary home, but John Keyes got ahead of him. That night still congratulating himself at cutting Henry out Keyes wrote in his diary "There, that will add to Henry's bundle of vain strivings."

Mary didn't marry either of her admirers. Instead she returned to Plymouth and married Marston Watson. The couple lived in a charming house called Hillside, with plenty of rolling land around it for Marston's nursery. Some of the trees still growing in Concord were sent here from Plymouth.

The friendship between the Marston Watsons and the Concord group was kept fresh by frequent visits back and forth. Alcott, Emerson, Thoreau were all guests at Hillside for days at a time, and Watson visited in Concord.

One day the Walking Society visited Hillside as guests of the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Bowler, whose gracious hospitality was delightful. Mr. Bowler pointed out unusual trees which Watson had planted. As it was springtime, the ground was carpeted with scillas as far as the eye could see. Hillside has always remained in the family and kept pretty much as it was in the Watsons' day. We were invited inside to see the spacious but homelike rooms and to meet Mrs. Bowler. Sitting before the fireplace we had a very strong feeling that we were back in earlier days, for Mrs. Bowler was none other than the granddaughter of Mary Russell, Henry Thoreau's dear friend and John Keyes' Sanctissima.



Oct. 1, 1855

THE THOREAU SOCIETY: A HISTORY by Walter Harding II.

I continued my search for Thoreauvians. The first really positive response came from the Rev. Roland D. Sawyer of Ware, Mass. A clergyman and the then probably best known member of the Massachusetts state legislature, Sawyer was an ardent Thoreauvian. In 1917 he had written and published a little pamphlet to celebrate the centenary of Thoreau's birth. A decided individualist, he was known as the "barefoot statesman," for he avoided wearing shoes a good part of the time. He had long wanted to organize an annual pilgrimage to Walden Pond and said if I would help him organize a "Thoreau Birthday Mecca," as he called it, he would then lead a discussion there on the possibility of starting a society.

I leaped immediately for the bait. Saturday July 12, 1941, Thoreau's 124th birthday, was set as the date; Walden Pond, the place. Raymond Adams gave us the names and addresses of about fifty people he thought might be interested. Allen French, the Concord historian, agreed to serve as chairman of a host committee. Elmer Joslin of Concord volunteered to mimeograph announcements. I mailed out announcements in all directions, to individuals, to newspapers, to magazines. The Concord committee set about arranging a luncheon at the Colonial Inn. But a week ahead of time Mr. French called to say so few had made reservations for the luncheon, he thought they had better cancel the whole affair. I persuaded him however to leave the doors open.

I was working that summer as a counselor in a boys' camp in the Berkshires. I was up long before dawn on the morning of the 12th to ride the milk truck into Pittsfield where I caught the early train to Boston. I met Roland Sawyer on the front steps of the State House and we drove out together in a drizzle to Concord. By the time we reached the pond, it was a downpour, and there

stood one of the wettest boy scouts I have ever seen. He told us the meeting had been transferred to the D.A.R. Hall on Lexington Road. When we got there, we were astonished to find the little hall jammed to the bursting point with a hundred people!

For the morning session Raymond Adams and H.W.L. Dana of Cambridge read short papers and Odell Shepard, then lieutenant-governor of Connecticut, and Judge Francis Nims of Greenfield, Mass., read poems. By noon the sun was shining and we processed over to the Colonial Inn for lunch, filling their dining room. After dinner the Herbert W. Gleason glass slides of Concord hand-colored by his wife were shown. By this time the temperature had spiked and since all the doors and windows had to be shut tight and shuttered in order to see the slides, the room became an oven. But the slides were decidedly worth it.

In the afternoon it was decided to organize a Thoreau Society. Raymond Adams was elected president and I, secretary. A committee was chosen

to set up a formal organization. The afternoon was spent in informal tours of Thoreau sites in Concord.

That fall I entered graduate school at the University of North Carolina and there Raymond Adams and I drew up a set of suggested by-laws. The committee met in Concord on October 14th and revised and improved our suggestions. In late October I mailed out the first bulletin, a one-page mimeographed sheet telling of the annual meeting and suggesting contributions of one dollar each from the membership to cover expenses since no official dues had been established. Bulletins would be issued quarterly, it said, and announcement was also made that a booklet containing the speeches and poems read at the July meeting would eventually be issued. Thus did the society get under way.

Oct. 2, 1855

EMERSON AND THOREAU: A QUESTION OF MILK AND FISH
by Len Gougeon

Most are undoubtedly aware of Emerson's early criticism of some aspects of Henry Thoreau's prose style and his assertion that "the trick of his rhetoric is soon learned."¹ He reiterated this criticism in his famous eulogy "Thoreau" but felt that Henry had improved somewhat over the years. He even went so far as to include several pithy statements from Thoreau's journals "not only as records of his thought and feeling but for their power of description and literary excellence."² Emerson culled these statements from Thoreau's manuscript journals which had been provided to him by Sophia Thoreau and which, as he noted in a letter to his son Edward in the month following Henry's death, "were now on my table."³ Emerson was so impressed by the documents that he quoted generously from them in his own journals.⁴ The first of those presented in the published form of the eulogy⁵ was the now famous statement, "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk."⁶ Presumably by this time Henry's writing style, and his thinking for that matter, were no longer quite so obvious to Emerson. However, they were apparently still somewhat tricky. A letter of Ellen Emerson to her brother Edward, written in the month following Henry's death, indicates that when Ralph Waldo first read the statement in the manuscript journals it was she who ascertained that it meant "that the milk was watered." The bard's response was that "he hadn't thought of that before...."⁷

The fact that Emerson chose to include in his essay on Thoreau a statement which he himself did not (at least at first) understand is perhaps explained by an earlier statement in that same work, "His (Thoreau's) riddles were worth the reading, and I confide that if at any time I do not understand the expression, it is just."⁸ University of Scranton

NOTES

¹ William Gilman, et al., eds., The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, IX (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-),

p. 9.

² Edward Waldo Emerson, ed., The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, X (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1903), p. 482.

³ Ralph Rusk, ed., The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, V (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 279.

⁴ Edward Emerson and W. E. Forbes, eds., The Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, IX (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1910-14), p. 425-443.

⁵ The essay "with some additions" was published in The Atlantic Monthly, August, 1862. (See The Works, X, p. 606).

⁶ The Works, X, p. 482.

⁷ Letter from Ellen Emerson to Edward Emerson, 6-30-1862. Ms. Ellen's Letters, Houghton Library, Harvard University (by permission of the Houghton Library)

⁸ The Works, X, p. 476.

Oct. 2, 1855

NOTES AND QUERIES

Thoreau Society Booklet 31 has been printed and will soon be distributed to the membership. It is THE FRED HOSMER COPY OF A DUNSHEE AMBROTYPE OF THOREAU by George Hendrick. The booklet was hand-set, one page at a time, by Herbert McArthur at the Arthur Plain Press in Albany, New York, and is being issued jointly with the University of Illinois Friends.

The winter meeting of the Thoreau Society will be held on December 29, 1981, at 12 noon, in the Petit Trianon Room of the Hilton Hotel in New York City in conjunction with the annual convention of the Modern Language Association. The topic will be "Teaching Thoreau in the Eighties," and a panel discussion will be led by Laraine Fergenson, Robert Gross, Michael Meyer, and Joel Myerson, and chaired by Walter Harding. One need not be a member of the MLA to attend.

Prof. Linda Walker of Baylor University has recently become a life member of the Thoreau Society. Life membership is one hundred dollars. A gift to the society in memory of J. Bruce Maclay of Gettysburg, Pa., has recently been made by Mrs. Maclay. The society has also received gifts from F. Braun and J. Robert Hager.

T-shirts labeled "THOREAU SAUNTERING CLUB. 'It is a great art to saunter.'" are sold by Kudzman, Inc., P.O. Box 202, Mentone, Alabama 35984, for \$6.50 post-paid, in all sizes from child's medium to adult's extra large. When your secretary wore one at the annual meeting box supper, he was besieged with requests, "Where can I get one?"

A spectacular 1982 calendar, entitled THROUGH THE YEAR WITH THOREAU, featuring Herbert W. Gleason photographs has been published by Conover-Mills of Cohasset, Mass. It may be ordered through the Thoreau Lyceum.

Books on Tape of Newport Beach, Ca., which rents tape recordings of books to listen to as you drive, has recently presented to the Thoreau Society a Golden Cassette Award because Thoreau's WALDEN is the book in most demand in their Classics category.

The late Edwin Way Teale willed to the Concord Free Public Library all his books and papers relating to Thoreau and the other Concord authors. Some of the gems from this collection were on display for the annual meeting.

Prof. Sheila Laffey of Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York, has recently released a ten-minute educational, documentary film entitled "Walden." It may be rented or purchased directly from her.

A cartoon in the April 2, 1981 NEW YORK DAILY NEWS says, "We do keep this apartment in the city, but we spend much more time either at our big old tumbledown farmhouse in Vermont, or our wooden shack in the Bahamas, or our adobe cabin in New Mexico--so, on the whole, we lead a rather Thoreauvian existence."

In reference to the carte-de-visite portrait of Thoreau described in the Spring, 1981, bulletin, Roy Nickerson of Bedford, Mass., points out that it has already been described on p. 103 of Oehlschlaeger and Hendrick's THE MAKING OF THOREAU'S MODERN REPUTATION.

Homer Rosenberger asks where in his JOURNAL did Thoreau write, "The ancients with their gorgons and sphinxes could imagine more than existed. Modern man, by contrast, can not imagine so much as exists." He points out it is quoted by Loren Eiseley in THE STAR THROWER.

Several members have understandably wondered why our by-laws were recently changed to read, "Only members of the Society who are natural persons shall be entitled to vote." Noone need worry whether he is a "natural person" or not. It was simply a phrase used to indicate that libraries and other institutions subscribing to our publications were not voting members of the society.

Can anyone help Ted Theobald locate either of these quotations from Thoreau: "Even the best things are not equal to their fame." And "All that man has to say or do that can possibly concern mankind is in some shape or other to tell the story of his love--to sing, and, if he is fortunate and keeps alive, he will be forever in love."

Buckminster Fuller, in Hugh Kenner's biography BUCKY, points out that nails in the 1840s sold for 3¢ a pound. Why then did Thoreau spend \$3.90 on nails for his Walden cabin. Did he really use 130 pounds of nails?



JOHN CAGE'S THOREAU ETCHINGS

For Several years now, John Cage, the composer, has been working on etchings based on Thoreau's drawings in his journal. They are being issued by the Crown Point Press, 1555 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, Calif. 94612. Above is one from the series called "Seventeen Drawings by Thoreau." Other series by him based on Thoreau drawings are "Score without Parts," "Signals," and "Changes."